

CITY OF NEWARK, NJ'S AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Dr. James A. Scott

Q: This is Glen Marie Brickus in the office of Pastor James Arthur Scott at Bethany Baptist Church. And first let me say good morning, Dr. Scott.

Scott: Good morning, Mrs. Brickus.

Q: And thank you for giving us this opportunity to come and talk to you about your experiences in Newark. We're doing this for the benefit of the Scott-Krueger African-American History, Oral History Project. And we're grateful to people such as yourself who permit us to talk to you and to give us some insight into the kinds of experiences that our people have had in the City of Newark over the years. So with that, let me begin by asking you to please give me your full name, your age, your place of birth.

Scott: My full name is James Arthur Scott. I was born March 10, 1931, and I'm sixty-five years of age. I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Q: And when did you come to Newark?

Scott: I came to Newark to live in 1963. However, my grandmother lived in Newark, and I started visiting way back in the forties.

Q: What is your current occupation?

Scott: I am a minister at Bethany Baptist Church.

Q: What other areas of work have you done, or what other kinds of work have you done since you came to Newark?

Scott: Okay. I have been for the last twenty-six years a professor at Rutgers University in Newark.

Q: Are you still working as a professor?

Scott: Yes mam I am.

Q: I see. What is your, how should I put this, your educational background? What degrees have you attained and what is?

Scott: I attended and graduated from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. I graduated in 1952 with a bachelor's degree. Went on to Yale Divinity School. Earned a bachelor of divinity. It's now called a master of divinity. Subsequently earned my Ph.D. at Rutgers in Newark, and have been awarded three honorary degrees.

Q: Whom did you marry, when and where? And how did you meet your wife?

Scott: My wife's name is Beverly Norene Dunston Scott. I met her at Yale. She was a student at Yale Nursing School while I was at Divinity School. We married in 1957, so we have just celebrated our thirty-ninth wedding anniversary.

Q: How long did you know Dr. Beverly before you and she were married?

Scott: About four years.

Q: What kind of work did Dr. Beverly do?

Scott: Well, she taught first at Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. And then she was head nurse at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York. The first black. And then she taught for

about eight years at New York University in the School of Education, taught nursing, and left that to do a post-doctoral degree at Rutgers University, and she then for about almost twenty years was a professor at Rutgers.

Q: Do you and she have children?

Scott: We have two girls. Our oldest girl is thirty-five years old I think. Lindo. And our younger girl, Kimberly, is twenty-seven years old.

Q: Now as far as your family background, what is your father's name and where was he born?

Scott: My father's name was James Shepherd Scott. He was born outside Norfolk in what is now Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Q: Your mother's name and place of birth?

Scott: My mother's maiden name was Mabel Bridgeford. She was born in a small town, can't remember the name of it, in Virginia.

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Scott: I had one brother and one sister. My brother died recently. My sister is still living.

Q: And where were they born?

Scott: All of us were born in Philadelphia.

Q: What was your father's occupation?

Scott: My father was a part time minister and he worked a series of odd jobs to support the family.

Q: Your mother's occupation?

Scott: My mother initially was a domestic. In latter years she went to school and completed a program to become an LPN, and as a licensed practical nurse, she stayed with a number of elderly people.

Q: Have you changed your name, like many of us do, we assume either Muslim or African names, or change the name for whatever reason, have you ever done that?

Scott: No. I have not.

Q: What about membership in a religious faith, a political organization, or did others in your family change their names that you know?

Scott: No one has changed their name, and no one has changed their political affiliation or religious affiliation.

Q: If you migrated to Newark, when did you first decide to leave home and come to this part of the country?

Scott: 1962.

Q: Why did you want to leave?

Scott: Well, I accepted the pastoreth of Bethany Church.

Q: Where did you go first after leaving home? Why and how long did you stay there? In other words, where did you first live when you first came to Newark?

Scott: Oh. We lived in the Colonnade Apartments. I lived there for about four, five years. And then we lived in North Newark on Highland Avenue.

Q: Did you or your family know anyone in Newark before coming here?

Scott: Oh, I had many relatives.

Q: Did anyone tell you about Newark before you came? If so who, and what did they say? Did they have a well-informed image of Newark before you came here?

Scott: Well, as I indicated, I had a number of relatives, cousins and uncles and so forth. But I also had a number of friends that I'd gone to college with who lived in Newark and whom I visited many, many times. I consulted my college friends more than my relatives. And they told me three basic things. First of all, that they felt Newark while deteriorating in the early 60s, was a place of immense opportunity and hope. They meant that there was a very, very small group of middle class blacks. There was a hunger for something better, and that Newark could be saved as it were. Secondly, they informed me that the churches had been very powerful, but they were losing their influence, and they felt a very strong religious ministry, that that could be reversed. And thirdly, they felt that there was not a strong sense of ethnic solidarity in the City of Newark. That many of the old line blacks really wanted to imitate whites, and many of the newcomers had no sense of belonging, and therefore they did not come together and form associations and communities and contribute. So these were the three major impressions I had before I came to the City of Newark.

Q: Have you seen those kinds of conditions or attitudes change over the years that you have been here?

Scott: Yes and no. The real turning point I think in the City of Newark was the riots. It was almost traumatic. I think one of the major changes that took place that I would not have predicted and may not have come if the riots had not surged up was the fact that whites and blacks began to come together saying what we can do to reverse the trends that are. This was helpful. This was healthy. On the other hand, I think that many middle class people as a result of the riots fled the city, ran away, and the city more so than ever lost a great deal of its leadership. I would say thirdly, the tax base, the housing stock, the financial base of the city just eroded as a result of the riot. And I think fourthly, Newark became the synonym for everything that was retched and bad in America. And when Ken Gibson, the first black mayor, said wherever Newark goes is just going before other cities. He was saying the truth.

Q: You had talked about your having consulted with your college friends before you came to Newark. When you came, what your own personal impression? Did you find Newark to be as they had represented it?

Scott: I really found it worse than they had represented. I was comparing Newark to other cities like Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, Washington, in which there was a very stable, steady and rather large influential middle class that had run virtually everything. This was not true in Newark. I did find, however, that there were some very good people. Some unusually good people in some unbelievable places. Let me give you an illustration. There was a guy named Willie Wright. He was a kind of a community organizer.

Q: Yeah. I knew him.

Scott: Willie Wright and I became friends almost in the beginning. And he would stop by. We were on opposite sides of almost everything. Politically, economically. But we became very close friends. I had a great deal of respect for Willie Wright. And I thought he was a man of integrity. That he knew what he wanted, and that he was strong enough and honest enough to consult with people who did not go along with him. There was another fellow who headed a tenant's

association in public housing. He was a boxer, former boxer, and I can't think of his name. We used to meet once or twice a month just to talk about where the city was and what could be done. So one of the most beneficial things that I found about Newark was the diversity and the fact that there were a lot of people who were concerned to speak over the fence. Over the ideological fence, over the political fence. There were people in CORE, there were people in Emiri Bharacha's organization. It was just refreshing to be part of a community in which you did not feel isolated. I could speak to Black Muslims. I really felt part of a community.

Q: Willie Wright was, was he one of founding influences on what is now the New Communities Corporation? I think I remember there was what they refer to as coalition six, which was supposed to be a coalition of six churches of various denomination that were the beginning of the New Communities as we know it now, and if I'm not mistaken I think that Willie Wright was one of those persons.

Scott: I'm not sure whether Willie Wright was or was not. He was involved in a great many things. He was as I indicated a genuine community organizer who believed that grass roots people could change their own destiny. And who was willing not only to work with grass roots peoples, but also willing to form coalitions and willing to work with established institutions on the basis of alliances. He may not have been a church member, he may not have been a Christian, but he recognized that the church is a viable institution, and he could not ignore it.

Q: Would you say that when you came to Newark and all of the years that you have been here and even now, that there was a lot of undeveloped potential in the African-American community that is still there waiting to be tapped?

Scott: Definitely. I think part of the problem that has always been here has been the neglect of the masses. Newark has been a very elitist city, where if you were black and came from the right family, the right side of town, went to the right church, had the right connections, then you got a lot of opportunities. And so there were really two societies, two worlds. And many young people

fell between the cracks, and there was no safety net. And the same is true today. It may be even worse today because the school system has deteriorated and is unbelievably bad.

Q: Having said all of that, did you find Newark to be what you expected when you came?

Scott: Yes and no. I thought it would be a community that hungered and thirst to be better. And in many senses it did not. There were a lot of poverty pimps, a lot of exploiters, who simply took the city for what they could get out of it. Secondly, I was disappointed that the churches and the established institutions were so indifferent to the opportunities to serve the masses of people. I did, on the other hand, find it refreshing and encouraging to meet people who were willing to wrestle with some of the very real and basic issues.

Q: When you first arrived here, where did you live? What was your housing like?

Scott: Well, we lived in the Colonnade in North Newark, and it was a very pleasant kind of housing.

Q: What was the cost like then as compared to what it is now, the housing for black folk in Newark?

Scott: Well, the cost for living in Colonnade was expensive when compared to the average rentals here in the City of Newark. However, there was nothing quite like the Colonnades in the sixties. There were not walk up apartments. These were not apartments in a two or three family flat. But these were high-rise elevator apartments that were rather luxurious.

Q: What was the neighborhood like where the Colonnade was located then?

Scott: Well, it was a very mixed neighborhood which was interesting. Our car was stolen a couple times. One had to be very careful in walking out at night, particularly if you were a woman.

There was a rather retched public housing community within a couple blocks of the Colonnade. There were a number of deteriorating neighborhoods all around. So the Colonnade sat like a jewel in the midst of a cesspool of bad housing and very cheap living conditions.

Q: Why did you settle in that neighborhood?

Scott: Well, that was the only luxurious housing for, the only kind of housing that was available to middle class people, I should put it that way. If one did not want to buy a house or could not afford to buy a house in Newark, then one moved into the Colonnade.

Q: Where did you live next in Newark after you left the Colonnade?

Scott: We lived at 222 Highland Avenue in North Newark.

Q: Why did you move there?

Scott: Well, the church bought a parsonage there. It was a very lovely small house, sitting on the corner of Highland and Second.

Q: What was that neighborhood like?

Scott: It was a neighborhood of single family homes, basically Italian. All homeowners. A rather nice neighborhood. However, right across the street was an apartment building, and after about five, six years the apartment building began to change, both in ethnic character from Italian and Irish to Hispanic, and the crime escalated. We had a number of very small incidents, nothing major. I remember once planting some beautiful white tulips, and when they came up, they were absolutely gorgeous. And maybe I had fifty or so of them. And somebody came by and relieved me of all the flowers as well as the bulbs.

Q: Where did you do your shopping in those days?

Scott: Well, we went to Kearney. I guess that where's we did most of our major shopping.

Q: Were there any African-American businesses in Newark where you could have shopped?

Scott: Not really for staple things. There were some restaurants and some small service organizations which we did patronize.

Q: How were you or how were black people, how was black people treated by the establishment owners where you had to shop in those days?

Scott: I think that white people in the latter part of the sixties looked at you, kind of sized you up, they listened to you talk, and looked at your hands, they saw how you dressed, and they treated you accordingly.

Q: What was the ethnicity or the race of the merchants in your neighborhood?

Scott: Italian.

Q: There were no blacks?

Scott: There were no blacks.

Q: Were there any resentments against stores in your neighborhood not owned by blacks? If so, why, and how was this resentment was shown?

Scott: Well, there were very, very few blacks that lived in that area then. Maybe less than three, four percent. The businesses for the most part were small, mom and pop organizations. And if

you wanted to stay in that community and go to a drug store, go to buy bread, get a quart of milk or a pizza, or buy a spool of thread, then you had to deal with an Italian entrepreneur. Blacks had not penetrated that area. And there was no strong asserted drive to buy black in that particular area.

Q: Did the local stores offer you credit or could you buy on credit at the local?

Scott: Well, I guess so. We never asked. But I guess it was available.

Q: How would you compare your experience in Newark with your experiences where you lived in Philadelphia before you came here?

Scott: I was just thinking about that. If we go back, I spent a lot of time in Newark in the 40s and the 50s when I was in college because my best friends lived in Newark as well as my grandmother, and my uncles and so forth. My grandmother lived on Rose Street, which was in the ghetto. She was a single woman, her husband having died long before I was born. And she was raising a couple of her grandchildren, the four of them. And she was always very pinched for dollars. Never on welfare, but very careful. Back in those times, there were Jewish merchants who provided credit. Black people could not have existed without the credit that was extended during the Depression. We also, I remember quite vividly going down to Prince Street, sometimes to buy a chicken. This was quite an operation. Because my cousins and I, we would have to choose the live chicken. The man would then kill the chicken and pluck, and we never really knew whether the chicken was going to be a good chicken or not until it was totally plucked and ready to be taken home. So that became quite an art. And we would buy melons and fruit and this thing and that thing. Grandmother eventually, and all my cousins incidentally were fellows, so there no girls, and we became quite expert at shopping. I know this is digression. Compared, I grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania, very, very small town, where everybody knew everybody else. So Newark was a big, booming metropolis as far as I was concerned. I did find out that most black people in Newark knew each other or knew something about each other. So, even though it was on a large

scale, you may not have known the individual in Newark, but if you said, a person went to Metropolitan Church, you knew someone who went to Metropolitan, and you could always check that person out. Black people knew each other in the small town in Pennsylvania and the big time Newark. The other thing was that I noticed that was similar in both neighborhoods. In the small town where I lived we had an underclass, people who drank and fought and shot craps and so forth. These people lived on certain streets. These people were ignored. They were not looked up to. We were forbidden as children to associate with them. Treat them nice, yes, but we couldn't hang out with them, visit their homes, etc. When Nathan Heard moved Howard Street, I could relate to that because the kinds of things that happened on Howard Street, I knew happened in my town on a street called Shady [?]. But even though you knew these things happened, you could not and would not if you were a decent, upright Christian young person, associate with them and get tied up in that kind of life. I think what I'm trying to say here is that there were really two divisions among black folks. We all lived in the ghetto, but the people in the ghetto who were most respected, most looked up to were those who were upwardly mobile and those who were educated, those who were trying to raise their children and make something of themselves, save their dollars, respect their homes and neighborhoods. And the group of people who did not do these things were kind of submerged and they were not leaders. After the 1960 riot, the group that had always been in the bottom began to emerge as leaders, and the so-called democratization process led to an actual lowering of morals and a lowering of respect for the so-called middle class.

Q: Dr. Scott, what do you think was the ratio of black to whites in Newark when you first came?

Scott: I suppose when we first came, about sixty percent of the people here in Newark were white, forty percent were black.

Q: What kind of, what should I say, day to day socio-economic and political impact do you think that that ratio of the races had on the quality of life in Newark?

Scott: It had profound impact. I remember talking to medical doctors who said that until recently, this was in the 1960s, it was difficult for them to get rights to practice in certain hospitals. To the extent that Newark became more and more racially integrated. Opportunities were open in a number of professions. There were people in our church who were the first black nurse in Markman Hospital, for example. These were not older people. Business opportunities were extraordinarily limited, and politically blacks were indigent in the early 1960s.

Q: Let's kind of go back a little. Did any of your ancestors or your family members ever live in the south?

Scott: Yes. Both my father and my mother were born in the south. Grandmother spent the greater portion of her life in the south.

Q: I ask that because our experiences, our living qualities, our habits of living, including food and dress, etc., were influenced, many of us who came to Newark at a very early age, if we had ancestors who lived in the south, our lifestyles were more or less came from that kind of background. And food has always been very important.

END SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE; BEGIN SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

Q: We were talking about the relationship between persons who came from a southern background and those who were born and raised in this part of the country. And we were talking about the impact that different kind of foods had on us. And I was just kind of wondering, when you, having been born in Pennsylvania and coming from there to Newark, do you feel like there any of those kinds of influences in your life?

Scott: Oh yes. Food was very important. I might say too, in addition to spending summers and some vacations in Newark when I was a kid, I also spent a considerable amount of time in Virginia with my father's folk. So there were a lot of southern customs. I had a great aunt here in Newark

who lived on Monmouth Street who spoke very slowly, was a real southern lady. I'm just sorry that I didn't tape record many of her witticisms and her sayings. She was an artist in the kitchen. This was where she spent most of her life. She had never worked outside her home. And she cooked up all kinds, sweet potato custard pie. And she could make four or five different kinds of corn bread. On Sunday we had corn bread that tasted like cake. We, I grew up knowing what johnny cakes were. There were very few things that were strange to me as a kid. I just assumed that everybody ate streak of lien. It wasn't until I went off to Lincoln that I realized that there some black folk who didn't even know what we were talking about.

Q: What about the differences between, in dress habits? Could you recognize between Newark and where you came, as you grew up, where you grew up? Was the dress similar when you came to Newark or?

Scott: Well, when I was a teenager and I would come to Newark, there were a lot of young people who wore zoot suits. Now, a zoot suit was something in my small town, Pennsylvania, that only fast people, people in show life would wear. And that was astonishing to me. When I came back in the 1960s, people in Newark for the most part, while a little bit more casual than they were in the small town where I came from, or New York where I formerly lived just before coming to Newark, dressed very similar to what I had known.

Q: Were relatives and friends helpful in support of you in Newark as they had been when you, where you lived before?

Scott: Oh yes. Yes.

Q: Was there such a thing as an extended family that was a part of your background?

Scott: We had an extended family in Pennsylvania, an extended family in New York. Initially when we came to Newark, it was just my wife and I and our children. Later, my mother-in-law

came to live with us and lived with us her final eleven years before her death.

Q: Where I grew up, I grew up in the state of Louisiana, and all older people, whether they were relatives, family, or not, they were aunt such and such or uncle such and such. Mr. and Miss, we were never allowed to call any person older than we, or any adult person, by their name. They had to be addressed as Mr. or Mrs., aunt or uncle, or whatever. Did you find that to be true in your experience as well?

Scott: In all of my adolescence, early manhood this was the pattern for my life. You never called anybody by their first name. And even now, someone who's older than I am, I will call them, if not Mrs. or Mr. or aunt or uncle, I'll say mother so and so or father so and so. It's really crudeness, vulgarity to call somebody by their first name who deserves and demands respect.

Q: Do you think that that kind of mandatory behavior on the part of us as young people generated a different kind of respect for older people than we find today? And have you seen that deteriorate over the years?

Scott: Yes. I've seen it deteriorate. Let me answer the last part first. There's almost no respect for older people nowadays. The mugging, the way that young men treat older women on the bus, the way that young people talk to each other around older people. These were things that were just unimaginable when I was a child. We were taught the Ten Commandments. And one of the important rules of the Ten Commandments was honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the earth. This meant not only one's immediate blood or biological family, it meant anyone who had the advantage of age. And you were supposed to treat them with dignity and respect. My wife and I have always felt obligated. God gave us a great many things. So we felt that we had to open our homes and open our hearts to older people. To go to our aunts, our uncles, our cousins, whoever needed us. I had an uncle on South Thirteenth Street, and he would very often call me, and he would just want to talk. Well, I dropped everything cause this was just part of my obligation as being a younger nephew. Sometimes he just wanted me to listen,

sometimes he wanted advice, but it was very important for him to know that somebody cared about him.

Q: What about the celebration of holidays? Have you seen changes in the way that such holidays as Christmas, Easter, the Fourth of July and Thanksgiving, were they celebrated differently as you grew up than they are now?

Scott: Yeah. If we go back to Pennsylvania, holidays were a family time. A time when everybody in the family came together. You invited the family who were outside the family, but who had no family of their own to come and to join with you. There were a lot of people, for example, who worked as domestics, and particularly if they were women, they had no husband or children, nothing, and so my mother would always open her house on holidays and Sundays and these people would come to dinner or just stay and enjoy the. I found when I came to Newark. It was very similar. I had a first cousin who owned quite a bit of property, and he allowed his wife's mother and her family to live in a house he owned. And in the backyard of this house every Labor Day, I think, he had a tremendous cookout. I mean like three or four hundred people would turn up. It was, this was not only the family, but this way his way of celebrating friendship. That was a kind of a new experience for me, but was a very good experience. When he died, the celebration died with him.

Q: I can remember. I lived in the State of Louisiana, and I can remember that when Thanksgiving, and especially Christmas was approaching, my mother would bake cakes and pies for weeks. And we had no refrigeration, but in the winter time, at that time of year it was cold enough, you'd have a trunk full of cakes and pies and cookies and you name it, all kinds of cakes, and for Christmas. And people came in from the beginning of the holiday until the set time when the celebration was over. And it was different from what it is now.

Scott: One of the things that I discovered as a pastor is that when I go to visit people in Newark, they invariably expect and want you to eat something. If it's not more than just a cup of tea. I

tried not to do it because you spend a great deal of time if you do do it. But this is part of a reflection of southern hospitality. You never go to a home without something. I found that this is a characteristic among working class people around the world, whether in Czechoslovakia or Poland or Cuba, people expect if you are their guest that you will partake of something.

Q: What about the use of intoxicants and other substances? Do you remember there having been an usage of those kinds of things in, as you grew up?

Scott: Oh sure. My brother made wine for a man up the street, and my brother was quite an expert at making all kinds of wine. People made wine, black people, and it was something they kept in the basement, and they used for very special occasions. However, it was a rare exception that you found somebody who was intoxicated. And here in Newark there are many people I found still, older people, still make wine, and who consider it a delicacy and are alarmed because it's basically a dying art.

Q: When we bought our house thirty-five years ago, there was, it had been owned by an Italian family, they planted a mulberry tree in the backyard for the purpose of making wine. They had jugs, and I still have some of those jugs. They became antiques. They were like utilitarian at that time, but still some of those stone jugs. You know, like the guys used to throw over their shoulder, etc., in the basement with wine in them. And I found that very interesting. But that was thirty-five years ago. That was quite a while too. What about the use of other drugs such as tobacco and chewing tobacco, snuff, cigarettes and that kind of thing? I know it was really very prevalent among our people in the south where I grew up. And I wonder whether or not that use of that kind of those kinds of things have diminished or is it still as prevalent as it ever was?

Scott: I think the use of tobacco and snuff and chewing tobacco has diminished. I remember many of my older aunts, older people, dipped snuff as they said. Some of them smoked a pipe. I don't really recall any women who chewed tobacco, but there were a number of men who chewed tobacco and smoking cigarettes or cigars was commonplace. On the other hand, I went all through

college and really until I got in my late thirties or early forties, I really had no concept of drugs other than, or substances other than tobacco or alcohol. I didn't know what marijuana was. I had heard of opium. Never seen it. Had no idea of the effects, and I thought that these were drugs that were more prevalent in the Middle East or the Far East than they were here in the United States.

Q: What about traditional medical practices? How did the use of such as home remedies, patent medicines and midwives in Newark compare with the use of such in your southern home or in your home where you came from?

Scott: Well, I'm an expert about that. My grandmother and my great aunt Rosie had these pet ideas about how children should be raised and how to keep them from the doctor. For example, my great aunt Rosie made this, what she called a tea, every year. And the ingredients, at least those I remember, was cod liver oil, a little bit of mineral oil, some orange juice, some salt burn, and some calyourin. And you were supposed to drink this and it would purge your system and keep you from having colds and other problems. Whether you wanted to or not. I think we stayed rather well because grandmother's particular remedy for almost anything was castor oil, several large tablespoons full of castor oil. You only told grandmother you were sick when you were on the way to the emergency room. There were many teas and herbal things. Sassafras tea if you had a cold or a headache. We wore little bags of something that smelled real bad around our necks in the spring to ward off colds and so forth and to cleanse our system. You smelled so bad that the germs couldn't come near you, but your friends wouldn't either. If grandmother would boil things and put them on a poultice and spread them on a sore or something, inevitably these things were very healing. One of the curious things is to my mind is where people found sassafras balm and this thing and that kind of herb here in the middle of Newark. I've never been able to figure it out.

Q: Well, see, that's a part of that southern heritage. I mean, they had relatives down there, and they would send it or bring it with them. And that funny smelling stuff that you talked about, I

remember that too. I believe they called it aspidia.

Scott: That's right. Yes. Yes.

Q: And either that or garlic.

Scott: Yeah. They put garlic, and sometimes they would mix the two together. And that was a volatile thing.

Q: Another thing that was very prevalent among persons who lived in the south, and I would imagine remained after they migrated from the south was belief in voodooism or fixing or hexes or whatever they called it. Did you ever hear of or know of anybody would believed in those kinds of things.

Scott: Well, my family didn't talk a great deal about that kind of thing. There were just certain basic guidelines. My mother would caution us not to eat at anybody's house unless we knew them very, very well. The only thing I knew about, my family was not superstitious so we didn't believe in Friday the thirteenth and all this. However, all of us felt that you could be hexed. And somebody could put something in your food or in your drink that could do you harm. One of the funniest stories that I heard in my career was when I was in [?] England and this old lady, Mrs. Allen, whom I went to see one afternoon, and she was in her late eighties then, and she sat on the porch of her house, and she explained to me that her brother, who had been courting Miss so and so for twenty some odd years and vowed he would ever marry it, but every Sunday they had dinner together. The women said, the woman who he was courting said in the beauty parlor that he was gonna marry her on or before such and such a date, and everybody laughed. And one Sunday he went over for dinner, and he didn't come back until Wednesday or Thursday, and when he came back, he said he didn't know what had happened. He didn't really wake up and come to consciousness until say Wednesday morning. And by that time, she told him they were married. And Mrs. Allen's moral was never eat at anybody's house because you don't know what they're

gonna put in your food, and they can fix you, and you will do something against your will.

Q: What about pets, Dr. Scott? Did you have pets as you grew up?

Scott: We had a dog that belonged to the whole neighborhood and all of us fed. His name was Gusty. It took a whole neighborhood to feed one dog.

Q: How about pets since you grew up and you established your own household family, have you had pets?

Scott: Oh, my wife loves dogs. So we've always had at least one and sometimes as many as three dogs.

Q: What about juvenile crime, juvenile delinquency? Was there, did people pay as much attention to it then as now?

Scott: Well, when we were coming along, juvenile delinquency was almost unheard of. Maybe it was because the reins that were put on children were so tight and short. We all had pocket knives, for example. We used to fuss and fight and controversies and conflicts when we were kids, but it never occurred to us to go into our pockets and take a knife and cut another child or try and stab one another. And we had a basic, I suppose, fear for our adults to such an extent that we would not consider damaging somebody's property. Of course, it was unthinkable for us to insult another adult.

Q: Getting back to race relations, relationships among black folk in Newark, what was your perception of blacks helping each other in Newark and how did that compare with the neighborhood where you came from?

Scott: There was a great deal of neighborhood in the Newark I knew in the 1960s, early 1970s.

Older people who may have had no family were well taken care of. Neighbors and friends and members of the church and members of the lodge would be sure to visit Sister so and so or Brother so and so. So there was this sense of neighborhood, this sense of relationship here in the City of Newark that I found very similar to what I had known as a kid growing up in Pennsylvania.

Q: What about race relations? How would overall relations with whites in Newark compare to relations with whites in your home?

Scott: About the same. I believe that most white people in Newark and in my home town were exploitive, and as long as black folk recognized them as great white fathers or great white mothers and kept their place, they were willing to be kindly disposed. The problem arose when we began to demand and when we refused to accept the crumbs they pushed off the table.

Q: How were you received or treated by African-Americans who had lived in Newark for a long time when you came here?

Scott: Well, curiously it could be either one of two ways. One, because I'd gone through college and gone to a rather prestigious seminary, a lot of blacks looked at me as being acceptable. There were another group, I guess you would call them the four hundreds, who were very color conscious and because I was darker than most of the other so-called leaders of the community, they stood off and, while not unkind, refused to give me acceptance or approval.

Q: Did you think that might have anything to do with the fact that you were a minister rather than a politician or a business person?

Scott: No. I think it, if I had been a politician or a business person, I would have faced the same kind of treatment. Color was a very important consideration.

Q: Do you know of any part of Newark where black people from another location, such as the

south, settled together? Did the people live in communities with people who came from the same geographic locations or were of the same kind of socio-economic status as everybody else in the community? Or did they just live wherever housing was available.

Scott: No. I think that people tended to cluster. Inside the ghetto, the people who were from Georgia tended to live more or less together, people from a certain section of Virginia. However, the second generation tended to move out those particular areas. There was a very, very small group of West Indian and Jamaican people who lived here in the early 1960s, and they too tended to congregate. So within the black community, there were these clusters of people who shared common identity. And one of the preserved, sort of the urban village whatever the urban village was, were they in.

Q: What kind of work did you do before you came to Newark as a pastor?

Scott: Well, I came from a job working with a major denomination where I was assisting city churches and the director of research. Prior to that for a year or two, I had been a pastor in New England. After I finished my college education, I stayed on for a short time and did that.

Q: This is a very interesting question. What was your first job in Newark, how did you get it, what did you do, and how long did you have this job?

Scott: My first job in Newark I got in 1963. I still have it. I am minister at Bethany Baptist Church. I think in practical, political terms I got it because of a friend of mine who is a clergyperson here. Homer Tucker, Dr. Homer Tucker, who was pastor at Mt. Zion Church. He urged and encouraged and no doubt was my major interpreter to the congregation. The congregation called me I believe in October or November, 1962. I came on a part time basis in January, 1963, and was officially established in April, 1963.

Q: Since you had this job, this was your first job in Newark, and it has remained your job until

today, how did and how do you regard this job?

Scott: Well, most days I like it. Some days I don't. I hate it some days. I think this is an exciting city to be working in. It's a very frustrating city. It's a city in which there's a great deal of corruption, a great deal of uncaring, insensitivity, but it's a city in which if you have anything on the ball, people will let you try to use it. It's a city where if you are trying to build something that's kind of relevant, people, black people, from outlying areas will come in. They want to be part of something dynamic. They want to try to help their brothers and their sisters.

Q: Now, Dr. Scott, you said that given certain conditions, or if you possessed certain qualities, people will let you do the things that you're capable of doing. Do you separate in your mind the black community from the white community in terms of being able to accomplish whatever it is that you set out to do? And do you think that we place too much emphasis, or we do not include people of all races and qualifications in our experiences or the things that we want to do? Do you think it's primarily promoted by people such as ourselves or do we think in terms of including everybody? I happen to know of your, what should I say, universal kind of experiences with people of all kind. But how do you find that relating to what you have to do here in Newark in your community?

Scott: I think initially the people of Newark want to establish an institution that's basically black, one of which they may be very proud. But in terms of quality of life and in terms of service and how it functions, efficiency and effectiveness, is not different than any white institution. I think once you have done that, people tend to move out of the ethnic mode. This belief that black people are superior or singular. We've already proved it. And so now we're able to welcome all people into our institution. Here in our church, it would have been very difficult for us to have welcomed West Indians, Africans, people from Poland, people from this and that place, and we have now have about twenty-three different nations represented in our congregation. But that would have been impossible until we had a sense of solidarity and an understanding amongst ourselves who we are and why we have a right to be proud.

Q: Those persons, though, look like the rest of us. What my question is and what my concern is is could we make better progress or more progress, or would our acceptance or our place in history be different than it is if we were, if we looked at humanity rather than nationality?

Scott: Definitely. I think one of the hangups that has been foisted on us is prejudice and discrimination.

END SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE; BEGIN SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

Q: We were talking about the possibility of what might be, or what could be if we had a different perception of humanity and put less emphasis on color and race.

Scott: We spend a lot of energy and intelligence dealing with race as if it were a crucial and cardinal concern of civilization. But part of the burden that we have is that there's no color. And we have to work hard to think of ourselves as human beings.

Q: And looking at ourselves as human beings and getting into or putting into proper perspective the relationships between the races, I think sometimes we tend to give more credit to the other nationalities than we give to ourselves and to our own people. And I have always wondered and have always wished very fervently that we would take the time and use the intelligence that God gave us to look at people as they are and not what they perceive them to be. And not let ourselves become what they perceive us to be. So I'm wondering, I'm still wondering, is there, will there ever come a time or do you see any sense to what I'm saying, Dr. Scott?

Scott: Yes. And I think there will come a time. But it's going to be in heaven.

Q: I guess I better leave that alone because, as I said before, that still bothers me. I don't go around talking about it day to day and your wife Beverly and I talk quite often on the telephone, and I'm one of those persons who watch, and the greatest avenue that I have to what's going on in

the world around us and how we relate to other people and how they relate to us is through the medium of television. So I sit there and I watch C-Span day in and day out and it's been quite an eye opener, quite an education for me. And I think it has a great deal to do with how I feel and I'm beginning to feel about the relationships among people and wondering is there something that we're not doing that we could do that would improve our life. See, I don't believe in allowing other people to define me. And I don't believe in responding to what other people think I ought to be.

Scott: But we, as black folks, have allowed ourselves to be defined for a century, generations, by white folks. Our work, our music, what is of value, our looks, all of it, our food. I can remember, I went through a period of my life being somewhat ashamed of the kind of food that my relatives and my folks would eat, and only when I realized that, when I went to school with southern whites and realized that they ate the same kind of food and were not ashamed of it, did I liberate myself from my old sense of shame.

Q: Do you see that changing for the young people of the current generation and generations to come? And what do you think it will take to change that kind of perception of ourselves?

Scott: I think it's changing, but it's changing superficially. Young people are much more interested in black heritage, black pride, a sense of history, and trying to understand what they means with William du Bois or Olar Dunbar, trying to understand what Newark was like fifty-seven odd years ago. But at the same time, don't have the kinds of relationships, the kinds of institutional membership with churches and lodges and other community organizations within the black community to do very much about what they have learned.

Q: Do you have any idea why that is or what it will take to change that?

Scott: Over several generations we have taught our young people, and this is the kind of a residue of the white world, the mass media, we taught our young people that the most important thing is to

belong to the mainstream, to buy barbie dolls, to own cabbage patch dolls, to ride in a Mercedes or a Nissan, to wear a certain kind of clothes, to drink a certain kind of liquor, and so forth. All of this has meant that the primary goal of the individual is not to become a race man or a race woman, but it is to become a truly integrated person in the mainstream of society. Indeed, I feel that one of the worst things that has happened in recent history has been the integration of American society because it's washed out our own sense of belonging, our own sense of concern about our black people.

Q: What were the common occupations for black men and for black women when you first came here?

Scott: Most of the people in the 1960s when I came here had worked in some kind of manufacturing or factory, women as well as men. They told me that the opportunity to work in factories came during World War II. Prior to that time, it was very, very difficult for blacks to crack the barrier and to get into factories. And still an appreciable number of the older people were domestics, working now in suburban homes and were proud that they had worked thirty or forty years for the same family.

Q: Did blacks enter new occupations during your residence here in Newark, and if so, what occupations did they go into and do you have any idea at what period of time that began to change?

Scott: Well, during the late 1960s, early 1970s, a lot of occupations broke open. There were jobs in banks, in the public sector there was a general opening up, civil service became much more concerned about having a good representation of blacks. The professional schools, the law schools, the school of pharmacy, the social work school, the library school, and so forth, began earnestly looking for blacks. And as a result, blacks moved into many areas whether it was architecture of engineering, driving a bus, veterinary medicine. For the first time you began to see blacks and you weren't surprised when you saw this. And all of this came about after the 1970s.

Q: What church do you belong to?

Scott: Bethany.

Q: And how active has your religious life been?

Scott: Well, very active because as a minister it's been the thing that's kept me going. I think the most refreshing and reward about Newark has been the rather strong sense of cooperation between the churches.

Q: Well, this would not be relevant to you. What positions do or did you hold in your church, and what roles did you play or do you play in the church? And what do you know about the history of your church?

Scott: Well, I can respond to the latter part. Bethany has had a very critical role in the development of the black community here in the City of Newark. It was one of the prime movers and shakers in the organization of the Urban League and the NAACP. Going back in history and talking to some of the older members when I first got here, it was very important to them for blacks to go into business. It was mainly mom and pop businesses, but they spoke about the era of the 1930s, the 40s, and the 50s when there was a strong sense of neighborhood when in, scattered throughout the black ghetto there were a fairly large number of black merchants. So, Bethany had always been involved critically in that. Bethany had been involved in the support of the civilization of families, and the nurture and development of young people. These were some of the things that we did.

Q: Dr. Scott, we have just ended a year long celebration of Bethany's one hundred twenty-fifth year. How important do you think, and you've indicated some of this by some of the comments that you've made already, how important do you think that Bethany has been in the life of Newark or in the surrounding communities? And also, you have not just been a local pastor of a local

church, and I'd like you to tell us about some of the other experiences that you had, some of the associations and influences that you've had on religion or Christianity throughout your experience.

Scott: Yes, we have just come to a year long celebration, a hundred and twenty-five years. We were organized in 1871. Bethany has always been a downtown church. It curiously, Reverend Glenn Hattfield, the pastor of Petty Church when he came here to preach, he said that Petty Church, the large, white Baptist Church had organized about a dozen churches in its lifetime, and the only one that has managed to survive is Bethany. I thought that was not only a very keen observation, but also a kind of tribute. There's been a very strong sense of loyalty to the church as we face the impacts of the communities in 1968. It's not that, I think that we had, not only had an educated clergy, but we pushed education. The past twenty years or so we've given more than a quarter of a million dollars for scholarships and a like amount as contributions to black colleges. We've tried to feature young people who are achievers. We try to bring a college choir here every year, to bring black college presidents. These are some of the things that I feel are exceedingly important. And getting to the other side of the equation, some of the things that I've done. I've always been very interested in the international dimension. I think that the church universal, the church of Christ for all people, is where religion ought to be. So I don't look at myself as strictly a black preacher located in Newark. I am on the board of trustees of the Moscow Baptist Seminary in Russia. Right now, I'm spending a considerable amount of time working with the Baptist World Alliance, which is an organization of a hundred and thirty-eight different nationalities around the world on virtually every globe, every continent, I'm sorry. And we're planning our congress for the year 2000 in Melbourne, Australia. And I'm the chairperson of the program committee. I spend an enormous amount of time working with denominations because I believe that denominations are the means of sharing and cooperation. I'm trying to establish that black people, black churches, have significant contributions to make, to give. We are not just takers, but we bring something to the table.

Q: Who have been some of the outstanding ministers of Bethany before you came? And what do you consider to be Bethany's major accomplishments aside from the scholarships that you

mentioned and what we do for educating black youth?

Scott: Well, certainly one of the most outstanding ministers was my predecessor, Dr. William P. Hayes. An outstanding oratory speaker, community worker. But there was also Dr. L. C. Hurdle who was back in the twenties, I guess, thirties. There was a Dr. Ricks, who was closer to World War, to the end of World War I. His daughter incidentally is still a member of our church, Helen Ricks. And if we go way back, almost to the turn of the century, it was Dr. Wynne had been pastor of Abyssinian in New York, who came here and stayed until about 1916, 1917. Bethany has had a very good history with pastors. The pastors who have come during the twentieth century have, on the whole, had long pastorisms and very stable and very progressive. God had made it possible that I will, already am the longest serving pastor. And, as I go into my thirty-fourth year, I will have surpassed Dr. Hayes by approximately five years.

Q: Would you give us some indication of the effort that Bethany is now engaged in terms of trying to build or establish a school? Hopefully by the time that this project is established, that will have become a reality so it might help us to know what kind of effort Bethany is making, and what do you anticipate as being the result of that effort.

Scott: We want to build a school for several reasons. First of all, we believe that black folk must be in charge of their own education. Secondly, historically the southern churches created academies and institutes when boards of education in states in the south would not provide quality secondary education. Thirdly, we believe that many public schools are cheapening the educational experience for black youngsters because the administrators or the planners are convinced that black young people cannot or will not or don't need to learn. And finally, we want to create the kind of school in which foreign language and technology, mathematics, the humanities, that's music and so forth, are built in to the curriculum. Our plans are to build a school building that will accommodate pre-school through grade six. We anticipate when the school is fully up and running that two hundred and forty young people will be involved. We also hope to have a fairly substantial and extensive parent education program so that we're not only dealing with the

youngster, but we're changing their total context. And we must do something with parents.

Q: How much have you participated in social and cultural activities in Newark?

Scott: A great deal.

Q: And what social or cultural clubs or organizations have you belonged or do you belong to?

Scott: Well, of course, I belong the various clergy associations and Baptist Conference. I belong to the NAACP. I have taken a very active part with a variety of groups concerned about better housing. I'm a member of the United Hospital Board of Managers. So across the years, I've also headed the task force for Mayor Gibson on education. So across the years, there's been a concern to share whatever talents I have with the larger community.

Q: Did you ever belong to any of the organizations such as the Elks or the Masons or literary societies?

Scott: No. I never had time.

Q: A choral ensemble, did you?

Scott: No. [Laughter] I would have liked to, but I just didn't have time.

Q: When did you first, well you didn't join, when was your entry into the socio-political community or the work that you did there? You mentioned having worked with the Mayor Gibson in some of his efforts.

Scott: Maybe I should tell a little story that kind of highlights how Newark was and show you what it is today. We moved here to the City of Newark maybe May, June, something like that,

1963. Sometime early in the summer, before August, I got a call from City Hall asking me would I take such and such a job. The job paid almost twice as much as what I was making. And I said, what do I have to do. And they said, nothing. And I said, God. And someone came and visited me and asked me, and their rationale was everybody else, every other clergyperson in the city has a job, why shouldn't you. My feeling was from the outset, and this was during the Adenizio administration, my feeling was that I did not want to be anybody's house nigger. That if I was to have any integrity as a leader in this community, I had to be free. And while I needed the money, I was not being paid very well, I at the same time valued my independence more highly than a hand out. So that was my first introduction to the socio and political culture here in the city. I've never, and I just decided that I would never be a politician. I didn't see how I could balance the demands of being a leader in the church and being a leader in the political realm.

Q: So you have not had any direct participation in political activities in Newark?

Scott: That's right.

Q: How much have you participated in community activities?

Scott: I tried to participate as much as I could. I have developed what I call a guerilla war strategy. And that is it's not as important that I participate. It's much more important that members of the church participate and be leaders.

Q: Right. Aside from being a consumer of regular goods and services, in what ways did you participate in the economic life of the community?

Scott: I was on the board of one of the first non-profit organizations that tried to build better housing, rehabilitate housing. We did something; we did not do a great deal. I suppose I've been, I was a member of the board of a black bank for a short time period, maybe three years. I've done a number of things, but my preference has always been to work in the background. And I have

seen my job to make sure to position members of our church in key areas so that they can begin making a difference.

Q: Did you ever own or operate your own business?

Scott: Never.

Q: How did you get information on the news and events of the community? This is from the time you came to Newark, what media was there for getting information about black life in Newark?

Scott: Well, initially it was basically from the old New Jersey Afro-American. There was some information in the old Evening News. But I depended to a large extent on the black newspaper.

Q: What black newspaper did there used to be or do you remember?

Scott: Well, the only one that I clearly remember was the Afro-American.

Q: Was there any such thing as black-oriented radio at that time?

Scott: WNJR.

Q: What was the relationship between black Newark and other black communities in New Jersey?

Scott: My feeling was that very little was known by Newarkers about other communities here in New Jersey, black communities. And moreover that Newarkers didn't really care that much about what was happening in other communities.

Q: Did you visit other black communities in the state?

Scott: Of course.

Q: Do you remember which ones and why?

Scott: Oh, I visited many if not most of the so-called black communities. Speaking, sometimes presiding at meetings, encouraging churches and the lodges and so forth to get involved in scholarship aid. So for a variety of reasons I went to other communities so that I could share with them.

Q: What outstanding blacks did you meet or hear of in Newark?

Scott: Well, Ashby was certainly one. I mentioned Homer Tucker already. There were undertakers like Beckett and Dabny and Cotton. The head of the Urban League, Jim, I forget his name. There were a number of people who were ordinary citizens, not professionals, who had made outstanding contributions in the civil rights and who were genuine political leaders.

Q: What about the first black mayor in the City of Newark, Mayor Gibson?

Scott: Ken Gibson was a kind of an icon. A young man who the black community respected and loved and supported. In many senses, I think he represented the best possible kind of leadership for that particular time. I still have exceedingly high esteem for Mayor Gibson.

Q: As a result of Mayor Gibson having been elected as the first black mayor in the City of Newark, what kind of progress or upward mobility have you noticed among other blacks in the City of Newark?

Scott: Well, I think Ken Gibson gave all of us a vision of what could be. He opened the door so that young people could think of themselves as genuine political leaders. I think that Payne in the Congress would not have been possible without Gibson in City Hall.

Q: Dr. Scott, what do you remember about such public agencies and the primary relationships in those agencies, such as the police, the fire fighters, the social workers, etc., school teachers and school administrators when you first came to Newark?

Scott: Well, one of my vivid experiences is presiding at the funeral of the first black fire fighter here in the City of Newark. I was not aware that we were closed out of so many civil service jobs, and to think that it wasn't until the 1960s in a very real sense that we had opportunity not only to get these jobs, but to move up in them. I remember with affection Jubert Williams who was a policeman when I first met him, and then he was going to Rutgers Law School. He was just a breath of fresh air. He was a bright, articulate, intelligent young man who was not satisfied simply to be a policeman, but always thought he could and should be something more. I think it's people like this who have an immense difference for black young people. We have many heroes. We don't always know who they are in our larger society, but if a man or a woman influence two or three young people, they deserve to be remembered by us.

Q: Do you know of or do you remember when blacks first were hired as fire fighters and social workers?

Scott: Sure. Sure. I shouldn't say I remember when they first, but I can remember the first generation when it was still a novelty.

Q: What about educators in Newark? I mean were there blacks in administrative positions in the school systems, and what did you perceive as the ratio of black teachers to whites in the schools in Newark at that time? And also the student population.

Scott: One of the people whom I know and whom I respect a great deal is Alma Flagg. And we've sat and we've talked on occasion and said how difficult it was. She was really misunderstood by many blacks who assumed that because she was black, she was on a particular, particular information to favor them. On the other hand.

END SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO; BEGIN SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

Q: Experiences of blacks, particularly in education in Newark.

Scott: Yeah. Alma Flagg is a case in point of how difficult it is to be a black professional. The schools, I've met white people who have told me that when they lived around Bethany, the old Bethany, fifty years ago, sixty years ago, that the majority of people were Irish, Italian or German, and that there were only a scattering of blacks. I met with a group of black teachers at a certain time in my life, and they were telling me -- I'm not sure, but I think this was back in the 1930s -- when there was a segregated school. And the purpose of having the segregated school was to preserve jobs for blacks. It was very, very difficult for black teachers to teach in a predominantly white setting.

Q: When people in the African-American community got in trouble or needed help to solve a problem, to whom did they go and how effective were they in getting the help that they needed?

Scott: Well, they either went to the preacher if it wasn't too serious a problem, or they went to people like Judge Hazelwood or Judge Yancey who were attorneys. This was the kind of world in which black folk could go to black folk. Not always on a professional basis, but simply because they were black and simply because they needed help.

Q: What was the general perception of Newark at that time? Was it considered as being a slum even then?

Scott: Well, yes and no. Newark began to decline apparently in the 1930s when communities like Belleville, Verona, and so forth opened up. With the coming of the automobile, with improvement in transportation, people moved out of Newark who were middle class. So to some extent the social degeneracy began long before blacks began to move into the ascendancy of the city. I think the thing that accelerated the movement toward becoming a slum was the riots.

Q: Other than white store owners and other whites with a vested economic interest, do you recall any other whites having an interest in the black community?

Scott: Oh yeah. There was a certain class of whites who were entrepreneurs because of social or welfare concerns. And they were concerned that the United Way operate fairly and efficiently. They wanted organizations such as mental health agencies to provide services. So these people did have a specific vested sunk interest in the City of Newark. And they were also wise enough to realize that if Newark was brimming over with crime and delinquency, sooner or later these problems would reach out into their suburbs.

Q: Did you and Dr. Beverly shop downtown Newark? And if so, what stores were there in Newark at that time?

Scott: Oh Macy's and Hanes, Kresges, Ohrbach's. We did most of our major shopping in Newark.

Q: What did you consider to be the best stores in Newark at that time?

Scott: Well, Hanes and Bamberger's.

Q: What incidents involving racial discrimination in Newark have you, did you ever experience?

Scott: I would find it hard to say that I experienced any, anything that was overtly racial. And that was predominantly because after a while I became fairly well known as a pastor.

Q: Did you know of any other African-Americans who experienced racial discrimination?

Scott: Oh sure. Yeah. That went with the territory.

Q: What do you remember about the Mayor of Springfield Avenue? And let me just say to you that this question I don't understand why it's here because I never knew who the Mayor of Springfield Avenue was and no one to whom I have spoken knows who the Mayor of Springfield Avenue was, but I just. I keep asking the question in hopes that somebody will know who the Mayor of Springfield Avenue was.

Scott: I have no idea who the Mayor of Springfield Avenue is or was.

Q: What do you remember regarding such local personalities as William Ashby; Meyer Ellingstein, he was Newark's first Jewish mayor; Prosper Brewer, Newark's first black policeman; Irving Turner, Newark's first black elected official?

Scott: Well, I remember Irving Turner very clearly. I remember Ashby of course. Ashby was a man of very high standards and a man of great wit and intelligence. I always felt that Irving Turner was put into political office because he wouldn't rock the boat too much. I don't remember the first Jewish mayor. And who was the other one?

Q: Prosper Brewer, Newark's first black policeman.

Scott: I don't remember him. I just heard people speak of him.

Q: What do you remember regarding black institutions such as hospitals and hotels and banks, etc, and where were they located?

Scott: Well, most of them had gone out of existence by the time I got here. The only one that I remember rather clearly was an old folks home in Montclair for colored people. Our church was very much involved in raising money and providing help for that. The black hospital had gone under. The only other black institutions of any consequence other than churches were lodges that had bought buildings and were moving into them.

Q: What about, there was a Coleman Hotel I believe was located someplace down the Central Ward when I first came to Newark, and I don't even remember when, what happened to it or.

Scott: Well, I remember this because when I was coming here in the 40s and early 50s it was still around. Incidentally, one of my cousins, second cousins, married one of the Coleman brothers. So I was very much aware of Coleman enterprises. All that I can say is I remember where it was. I can remember that the Coleman brothers had a quartet, that they had a real estate agency, they were in a lot of businesses. They had something comparable to Peg Leg in Newark. They were real entrepreneurs.

Q: What do you recall regarding the kinds of music that you heard in black Newark, or do you remember listening to and/or seeing musicians perform jazz, gospel or the blues and at what places and what musicians?

Scott: Well, as and will, I not only went to church, but I did know something about nightclubs and so forth in our community. I like jazz. I can't remember any particular jazz combos or quartets or jazz places that were memorable in Newark, but as a college student I very often went with my friends to a variety of clubs and places where jazz and blues were played.

Q: Do you remember any of the artists?

Scott: No.

Q: In what leisure time activities did you engage?

Scott: A lot of basketball when I was younger with my friends. We used to leave Newark and go to East Orange to visit the girls. That was an interesting leisure time activity. These seem to be the major. We would sometimes go over to Peterman's over on Clinton Avenue and late at night meet our friends and buy something sweet, go to somebody's house and talk half the night. These were

the kinds of. Life really revolved to a large extent around homes. My best friend lived on Sunshine Avenue, and he has friends on Ridgewood and the other streets nearby, everybody would go around visiting one another.

Q: What about the Newark Eagles? Do you remember them?

Scott: I remember them because I was a baseball fan, and remember the old black, the old Negro League. Homestead Rangers in Philadelphia.

Q: Did you ever attend any of the Newark Eagles' games?

Scott: Sure. When they came to Philadelphia. I can't remember ever attending one here in Newark.

Q: Were there other black athletic or sports events that you attended?

Scott: Not here.

Q: What do you recall regarding the seamy side of black Newark life? What places and locations were involved? And do you recall any black gangsters and what activities did they engage?

Scott: Well, I don't really recall. I knew that along Howard Street and certain streets like that there were a lot of very bad things going on. However, I really wasn't involved, and I never really who were the gangsters and leaders of gangs and so forth.

Q: What do you recall regarding public education in Newark? How well academically did black students seem to perform and how were they treated by white teachers and/or white students?

Scott: I can only speak about that on the basis of hearsay. I think on the whole, most people who

grew up here and as they reminisce, they felt they got a pretty good education. They felt at one time the Newark schools were superior. And I'm speaking about a period before World War II. They felt that the teachers for the most part were fair, partially because there was a rather small proportion of Negroes living in the City of Newark.

Q: What would you consider to be the five most important events or developments that have occurred in Newark during your residence here? For instance, like strikes or political elections, or riots, fires, natural disasters or black immigration to Newark.

Scott: Well the five. The single most important was the Newark riots. Secondly, I would hope the election of Ken Gibson. Thirdly, was the creation of a number of black economic institutions such as City National Bank. Fourth, I see the stabilization and the modernization of churches. Mt. Zion, Bethany and others that have addressed emerging problems like AIDS or the break down of the family. And fifth and finally, there's I feel a higher level of cooperation among churches in particular, but among blacks in general than there has been any other time during my stay here.

Q: Did you have any personal involvement in any of these developments that you mentioned?

Scott: Well, yeah. I guess to some limited extent most of them, except the riots. But then the patching up that followed the riots I was very much involved in.

Q: In what major ways has Newark changed since you first arrived here and how do you view this change that has occurred?

Scott: Well, a number of things. Number one, there's continued to be a degeneracy in the housing stock. In other words, it's very difficult to find good housing. Number two, neighborhoods have declined. And this means that working class, decent people who want to live in Newark find it exceedingly difficult. Thirdly, there's been a breakdown in the public institutions. Public schools

have become just feeders for jobs. Fourthly, is a cultural corruption in City Hall. This is the most corrupt city I've ever seen in my life. And it gets worse as time goes by. And it seems that no one, the council, the mayor, or the citizens are really concerned about stemming the tide of the downhill slide in terms of corruption. These are some of the major things that I see.

Q: I'm going to ask you a two fold question here. When do you feel black life in Newark reached its highest peak? What was so great about that particular time? And when do you feel black life in Newark reached its lowest point? And what was so bad about that time?

Scott: Okay. The latter question is much easier to answer. The lowest peak was the year or two after the riots. Everyone felt demoralized, they felt tricked, they felt cheapened, we were ashamed. The highest point probably came when Ken Gibson was elected to City Hall. It was a time of unusual high hopes, a time when we felt we had an opportunity to make a difference in America. The hopes, I think, were a bit too optimistic.

Q: Did you know Louise Scott personally? Did you ever meet her?

Scott: No.

Q: What do you recall regarding Miss Scott? What kind of person?

Scott: Well, the only thing I knew she was an elderly lady who had gone into business and had been relatively successful. I didn't know too much about the particulars.

Q: Did you have any idea of what the community's perception of her was?

Scott: The only thing that I heard was pretty much what I said, which I learned from a variety of people in Newark.

Q: How would you sum up your experience of living in Newark?

Scott: I enjoyed it. I've always loved Newark. It's a nice place to live and it's a nice place to work.

Q: If you had to live your life over, would you live in Newark? And give reasons for your answer.

Scott: Yeah, probably I would live in Newark. Reason. I think it's a community in which if one is on the ball, you will sooner or later be accepted. It's a community in which if you have any talents, they are more likely to be recognized here than in Philadelphia or Chicago or New York. And thirdly, I think that sooner or later there's grudging appreciation for who you are and the job you did.

Q: This is almost the end of our session, Dr. Scott, and let me express my gratitude to you for having taken your time to talk with me, to listen to my questions and to give me your answers. But I'd like to know finally is there anything that we did not cover that you would like to tell us about Dr. James A. Scott, the man.

Scott: No.

Q: What are your aspirations for your future and what do you see as the prospect for the City of Newark's future?

Scott: Well, my aspirations are to retire and do some of the things I want to do. The City of Newark? I see it becoming much more middle class, many more whites moving in. Becoming a bedroom community, but unless there is a reversal, black people are going to lose political power. And in the not too distant future I see a hispanic mayor because we're moving toward a hispanic majority. I think that blacks would wisely forge some alliances and coalitions with hispanics and with whites. Will it happen? I don't know. Will we have conflict and rebellion and riots like we

had earlier, I don't think. I see Newark as a city that is being reborn. I'm not sure what the mayor means when he says renaissance. I haven't seen the renaissance yet¹, but there's hope on the way. And I believe people like I, I will see a bigger, better and more humane city of Newark.

Q: What do you think that we as blacks need to do in order to bring about those changes that you foresee?

Scott: Well, we have to register and vote. We have to support our civil rights organizations. We have to become institution builders and recognize that every institution has a right to exist, but every institution has a responsibility to work with other institutions to raise the quality of life. We could become more concerned as black people to give back something. We have not learned that yet. We have taught our children to get; we've not taught them to give.

Q: Dr. Scott, do you think that the church per se, and I don't mean a Bethany here or a Metropolitan over here, do you think that the church per se does as much as it can do or should do to provide the kind of initiative and the kind of leadership that blacks seem to need in order to move beyond the status quo?

Scott: No. We don't. We are not providing the mentoring skills. We're not providing the kinds of parental skills. We are not teaching folks how to interact and cooperate with one another. Therefore, the black community is not making the kinds of progress it could and should make.

Q: Well, again, let me just say thank you, Dr. Scott. It's been an extreme pleasure for me cause I didn't, I wondered whether I would ever get a chance to get you to sit down two hours to go through this. But I can't tell you how appreciative I am that you did do it. And I think it's going to add quite a bit to our effort to give future generations some idea of where we came from and how we got to wherever we might be at that point. So, again, I want to thank you very much.

Scott: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW